(Falco eleonorae), also a candidate for an ancestral falcon (Olsen et al. 1989). However, the wings and tail of the Fox Kestrel have a narrower base, as if resulting from a distal enlargement of gracile structures of *tinnunculus*-like ancestors. Thus, the Fox Kestrel may be less an atypical kestrel than usually assumed. Also, I suggest that the infrequent hovering of Fox Kestrels can be explained. This kestrel may have departed from more *tinnunculus*-like birds through specialization to inexpensive, slow flight for hunting small, scattered, and not very mobile prey in dry savannahs. The suggested resemblance, size apart, with the Lammergeier may represent convergent evolution toward the ability to remain on the wing for long periods in order to hunt broken terrain.

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Probable Breeding of Short-eared Owls in Southern West Virginia

During spring and summer of 2001, we observed adult and juvenile Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) frequenting grassland habitats of three reclaimed mine sites in Logan, Fayette, Kanawha, and Boone counties in southern West Virginia. This species has been previously reported as an uncommon migrant or winter visitant in West Virginia (Hall 1983, West Virginia birds, Special Publication Carnegie Museum of Natural History No. 7, Pittsburgh, PA U.S.A); however, there are no breeding or nesting records in the state (Buckelew and Hall 1994, The West Virginia breeding bird atlas. Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA U.S.A., Holt and Leasure 1993, *in* A. Poole and F. Gill [Eds], The birds of North America No. 62, The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA U.S.A.). Our sightings lend support to the idea that Short-eared Owls are opportunistic and will colonize areas when the conditions are suitable.

Eight different adult female and three different adult male Short-eared Owls were observed multiple times on or near reclaimed grassland areas. They were identified as different individuals based on their repeated occurrence in specific areas of each mine. Sex determination was based on observed plumage pattern differences (Sibley 2000, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, NY U.S.A.). Observation dates ranged from 14 March–13 July 2001, with sightings occurring between 0545 and 1130 H, and 1630 and 2000 H EST. The owls were observed in a suite of behavioral contexts. Most were observed flying low over grassland habitat actively foraging. One individual male was observed in an acrobatic aerial display with a male Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). A very vocal female was observed on the ground consuming an unidentified mammalian prey item. Several individuals were observed perched on large rocks

Two juvenile Short-eared Owls were observed flying low over grassland areas on two separate mine sites in Logan and Boone counties on 11 June 2001 and 19 June 2001, respectively. On each occasion, juveniles were closely accompanied by an adult female. In one case, the juvenile was following a female that was hunting and capturing prey. Juvenile plumage patterns were similar to the adults with more black on the facial disks and tawny feather tips. The time of year that the juveniles were present and the lack of suitable habitat elsewhere in this region, strongly suggests that these individuals fledged from nests on the mine sites. Typical breeding dates for this species range from mid-April to June in most years (Mikkola 1983, *Br. Birds* 65:453–460).

Short-eared Owls prefer to forage and nest in open habitats such as old fields, hay meadows, pastures, prairies, dunes, and marshes (Johnsgard 1988, Smithsonian Institution Press. Washington, DC U.S.A.). Mountaintop mining valley fill (MTMVF) practices in West Virginia convert large areas of mature hardwood forest to early successional habitats consisting of low- to medium-height grassland plant communities. The three reclaimed MTMVF mine sites on which owls occurred included expansive networks of contoured grassland habitat (ca. 1600–2000 ha at each site) that ranged in age from 5–19 yr old. Reclaimed sites are dominated by a mixture of grasses and forbs (native and non-native) with scattered shrub/seedlings of autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and European black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). These areas support dense small mammal populations that include white-footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*), deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), southern bog lemmings (*Synaptomys cooperi*), and meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) (Chamblin 2002, M.S. thesis, West Virginia University). These species along with an abundant grassland bird assemblage dominated by Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*), Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), and Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) apparently provide an adequate prey base for Short-eared Owls on these sites.

The North American breeding distribution of Short-eared Owls ranges from western Alaska east through Canada to Newfoundland, south to central California, and east across the north-central states to New Jersey (Johnsgard 1988) Holt and Leasure (1993) indicate that this species occurs year-round north and west of West Virginia while northern breeding populations are migratory. Our observations and accounts from others suggest that this species may be expanding its range along the southern edge of the previously reported North American breeding range. Several accounts have confirmed Short-eared Owl presence and breeding on coastal grassland habitats in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina (Iliff 2001, *N. Am. Birds* 55:284–287). Besides West Virginia, Short-eared Owl breeding also has been documented on reclaimed mine sites in Kentucky (Stamm and Clay 1989, *Kentucky Warbler* 65:75–76); however, breeding populations appear to be restricted to a few larger reclaimed areas (Palmer-Ball et al. 1990, *Kentucky Warbler* 66:73–80). This species exhibits some degree of nomadism with fairly long-distance movements by juveniles and adults (Clark 1975, *Wildl. Monogr.* 47:1–67, Cramp 1985, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, UK, Mikkola 1983, *Br. Birds* 65:453–460). Such behavior undoubtedly contributes to the ability of Short-eared Owls to find and colonize the newly-created grassland habitats in eastern states, allowing an expansion of the breeding range. This range expansion may be temporary, however, after succession renders these sites unsuitable for Short-eared Owls.—**Frank K. Ammer and Petra Bohall Wood, West Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, BRD/USGS, and Division of Forestry, West Virginia University, P.O. Box 6125, Morgantown, WV 26506 U.S.A.; e-mail address: fammer@wvu.edu**

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ENDANGERED EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*NEOPHRON PERCNOPTERUS*) ENTANGLED IN A POWER LINE GROUND-WIRE STABILIZER

Avian mortality is one of the highest environmental costs of power lines all around the world. Research has widely demonstrated the killing of thousands of birds in some regions, and power-line mortality has contributed to declines in some populations of rare species (see review in Ferrer, M. and G.F.E. Janss 1999, Birds and power lines. Ed Quercus, Madrid). Mortality on power lines is traditionally associated with two types of accidents: electrocution and collision (Janss, G.F.E. 2000, *Biol. Conserv.* 95:353–359). Electrocution occurs when the bird touches two wires or, more frequently, a wire and the grounded metallic pylon; in addition, collisions with overhead wires usually take place when visibility is low (at night or in foggy weather) and species involved are usually flocking birds, such as ducks or gulls (Hass, D. 1980, *Ecol. of Birds* 2:117–157; Avian Power Line Interaction Committee [APLIC] 1996, Suggested practices for raptor protection on power lines: the state of the art 1996, Edison Electric Institute and Raptor Research Foundation, Washington, DC U.S.A.; Ferrer et al. 1991, *J. Field Ornithol.* 62:181–190).

Here we describe a new type of accident in power lines, entanglement in power line ground-wire stabilizer. This has been suggested before: see Olendorff et al. 1981, Suggested practices for raptor protection on power lines: the state of the art 1981, *J. Raptor Res. Rep.* 4:1–111. We observed this type of entanglement in a 66 kw transmission line, property of Empresa Nacional de Electricidad, Sociedad Anónima (ENDESA), crossing the island of Fuerteventura (Canary archipelago, Spain). On 10 November 2000, at dusk, we found a subadult Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) with its right talon hooked up on a ground-wire stabilizer placed on one side of the power pole (Fig. 1) This individual probably perched on the stabilizer, as it is frequently observed among roosting individuals (see below) It could have caught its right talon in the lower hook-shaped structure, preventing escape. We rescued the bird the next morning; it was exhausted but still alive. Its ankle joint was seriously damaged. Consequently, it was necessary to amputate its talon. The bird was a 3-yr-old female. It had been captured using a cannon net in September 2000 as part of a population monitoring research program. The metallic ring on its right tarsus probably exacerbated the damage, as it hung from the stabilizer.

Egyptian Vultures in Fuerteventura usually roost along the 30 km on this power line year round; up to 125 individuals have been observed at one time with a maximum of 13 birds/pylon; ca. 96% of the total population on the island (Donázar et al. 2002, *Biol. Conserv.* 107:89–97). Electrocutions and collisions have been reported on the island, affecting Egyptian Vultures and other endemic and endangered avian species (Lorenzo, J.A. 1995, *Ecología* 9:403–